

Science and Human Rights Coalition Meeting Summary
16-17 July 2015

Overview

Throughout the first day of the meeting, attendees learned about the intersection of business and human rights as it relates to science and technology. Sessions introduced the field of business and human rights, explored the topics of human rights impact assessments, due diligence, multi-stakeholder initiatives and voluntary codes of conduct and discussed the potential role of science, engineering and health associations.

Introduction

Speakers: *Jessica Wyndham*, AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Rush Holt, AAAS and Science Family of Journals

Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director of the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights, and Law Program and Coordinator of the Coalition, welcomed attendees to the meeting. She introduced the keynote speaker **Rush Holt**, the new CEO of the AAAS and the executive publisher of the *Science* Family of journals.

Rush Holt began by emphasizing that scientists and scientific societies play an extremely important role in the human rights community. Spanning its history, AAAS has contributed to the field of human rights through its many projects and endeavors. In 1986 AAAS adopted a resolution reestablishing access of a Paraguayan scientist to his data. In 2005, AAAS began efforts to apply geospatial analysis to the documentation of human rights violations around the world. AAAS is not just the convener of the Science and Human Rights Coalition; it has strived to be a standard-setter in human rights and ethical behavior both in the practice and application of science. The AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition was created to expand the application of science for human rights, to develop standards and to provide a mechanism to assist professional associations and individual scientists integrate human rights into our practice. Holt urged that we all should be asking ourselves more frequently what we are doing to advance human rights, in observing standards, in conducting internal audits, in encouraging whistleblowers and protecting them, and in external audits, reviews and disclosures. He also emphasized the importance of reviewing and supporting standards in our own professions, associations and societies. Again, he advised that each of the attendees ask what role they can each play in discussing, airing, and perfecting ethical standards in their everyday work.

Holt emphasized that scientists are often the leaders in calling for the defense of human rights, but they are also sometimes party to the activities that impinge on human rights. Holt concluded by restating the mission of the AAAS: "Advancing Science, Serving Society." He affirmed that the scientific and human rights communities together can advance science and serve society better.

Opening Plenary: A STEM Perspective on Business and Human Rights

Speakers: *Bennett Freeman*, Corporate Human Rights Benchmark Initiative / Global Witness
Arvind Ganesan, Human Rights Watch
Theodore Lowen, Hitachi America, Ltd.
Moderator: *Motoko Aizawa*, Institute for Human Rights and Business

The opening session began with the presentation of a [short video clip](#) that explained the three pillars of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: (1) state duty to protect, (2) corporate responsibility to respect, and (3) access to remedy. The Guiding Principles are a standard for action and accountability directed at both States and businesses. The field of business and human rights has been informed by people from many academic disciplines and increasingly enriched by people who bring different expertise. Panelists described the role of business and human rights in each of their organizations and in their respective fields and the role of scientists in developing business and human rights so far.

Motoko Aizawa, Managing Director USA of the [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#) (IHRB), described how IHRB looks at four key flows that underpin globalization: flows of people, information, finance, and commodities. The work of IHRB is grounded by the UN Guiding Principles, which address two actors, States and corporations, but do not mention how professional associations fit into the principles. She emphasized that to advance the UN Guiding Principles, the human rights community must join with the scientific community.

Arvind Ganesan, Director of the [Business and Human Rights Division](#) at Human Rights Watch (HRW), explained that HRW created a business and human rights division in 1998, which since its inception has investigated situations where economic activity has had an impact on human rights. They work with industries and companies to stop harmful practices and create standards and principles to prevent those practices in the future. Given that the scientific community is at the forefront of both industry and the problems that occur, Ganesan argued that their voices should be included in the remedy of its violations.

Theodore Lowen, Senior Vice President of Brand and Communications at [Hitachi America](#), began by emphasizing that scientists must take the lead in advancing the right of access to the benefits science through industry. In 2008, Hitachi began addressing business and human rights. Since then, human rights due diligence and the UN Guiding Principles have been implemented by the corporation. Hitachi recently issued guidelines and implemented a human rights due diligence training program, an E-learning process, within the corporation. As part of its community responsibility efforts, Hitachi also has begun to tackle the issue of access to STEM education in the U.S. As part of this program, the company has provided electron microscopes to educators and developed outreach educational programs for high schools. Lowen hopes to expand these programs throughout the Americas and to create college level initiatives as well.

Bennett Freeman, Board member of the [Corporate Human Rights Benchmark Initiative](#) and Chair of the Advisory Board of [Global Witness](#), gave multiple examples of issues of business and human rights that he personally has been involved in where people with scientific and technical backgrounds are at the forefront. One of the issues was conflict minerals, which requires technologies to trace minerals for a conflict-free smelting process to give assurance to companies that their materials do not contribute to human rights violations. The solution to these human rights issues like conflict minerals were only possible through scientific and technical expertise.

Freeman expressed the view that human rights are fundamentally about human values and can only be addressed through scientific analysis and technical solutions.

Plenary: Human Rights Impact Assessments and Due Diligence

Speakers: *Michael Aisenberg*, George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security / ABA Science and Technology Law Section
Ragnhild Handagard, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Soledad Mills, Equitable Origin
Elizabeth Wise, NomoGaia

Moderator: *Elise Groulx Diggs*, Business and Human Rights Advisory Board / ABA Center for Human Rights

This session addressed the topic of human rights due diligence, the practice of identifying the human rights impact of business operations. Due diligence assessments reveal to companies how they can know and show that they respect human rights. Human rights impact assessments aim to identify potential human rights abuses to communities to mitigate risks. This applies to the whole spectrum of human rights, including those outlined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The four stages of the human rights due diligence process involves (1) assessing impacts, (2) responding to those assessments, (3) tracking the effectiveness of responses and (4) communicating to the public and relevant stakeholders. The assessment of impacts stages includes not only the impacts of the company itself on human rights, but also the impacts linked to the company's supply chain. The practice of human rights due diligence by companies is essential for adherence to the UN Guiding Principles.

The UN Guiding Principles do not prescribe one particular model for implementing due diligence. **Ragnhild Handagard**, Consultant to the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), explained that there is a need for better methods for obtaining data and measuring impacts. To obtain better methods, companies need to publish the techniques of their human rights impact assessments and increase transparency. In addition, she emphasized that we should be working to bridge the divide between the scientific and the human rights communities to effectively track the effectiveness of due diligence. Due to the lack of published human rights impact assessments, there is not one "gold-standard" for implementing due diligence. **Elizabeth Wise**, Director of [NomoGaia](#), reported that NomoGaia works to design methodologies for doing human rights impact assessments, with scientists as major contributors to most of the design stages. CASE STUDY

Although best practices of human rights due diligence have yet to be defined, effective due diligence should involve not only identifying human rights impacts on a community from the top-down perspective of the company, but also from the bottom-up perspective of the community. **Soledad Mills**, Chief Executive Officer at [Equitable Origin](#), explained that Equitable Origin seeks to engage with local communities to create standards and build a local capacity for monitoring and continuing assessment of the standards. In order to make sure indigenous rights are heard, more proactive communities must be created. The scientific community can be helpful in correctly informing local communities and allowing them to participate in the process of impact assessments. All panelists emphasized the importance of partnering with the scientific and human rights communities in order to better tackle the many business and human rights issues we face today.

Plenary: Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives and Voluntary Codes of Conduct

Speakers: *Lisl Brunner*, Global Network Initiative
Gabriella Rigg Herzog, Hess Corporation
Paul Schaper, Merk & Co., Inc. / Global Fund
Stephen Winstanley, MSI Integrity

Moderator: *Rebecca DeWinter-Schmitt*, Human Analytics/ American University, Washington College of Law

This session highlighted the increase in forms of voluntary codes of conduct (voluntary regulation) for responsible business conduct and what role the scientific community has taken and can take in multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs). Voluntary codes of conduct are non-legislative codes of practice that influence or shape standards for marketplace behavior. MSIs are a means of engagement that seeks to bring stakeholders together to participate in discussion, decision-making, and implementation of solutions to a problem. Multi-stakeholder initiatives remind stakeholders what they have in common and create an opportunity for dialogue between communities. The exchange of knowledge between stakeholders enables more successful and effective solutions for human rights issues. **Paul Schaper**, Executive Director for Global Public Policy at [Merk & Co.](#) and Private Sector Board Member to the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#), gave a perspective from the pharmaceutical industry and emphasized that when dealing with disease and illness, human rights is a key factor in delivering products and care to affected population. It is thus vital that companies implement shared standards to make sure products are delivered to people without discrimination and care is not coercive or below a quality standard.

Voluntary regulation usually arises in business practice due to bad press or crises. **Stephen Winstanley**, Coordinating Attorney for the [Institute for Multi-Stakeholder Initiative Integrity](#), added that another reason that companies develop voluntary codes of conduct is because of governance gaps, where a government cannot or will not act to address a human rights issue. However, the way in which companies regulate themselves can vary greatly and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of voluntary codes of conduct can be difficult. The most effective form of voluntary regulation should involve mechanisms for accountability and transparency, according to **Lisl Brunner**, Facilitator of the [Telecommunications Industry Dialogue](#) at the Global Network initiative (GNI). Brunner explained that there are not many companies that publish their methods of self-regulation, so best practices are hard to define. There is a huge need for corporate transparency of voluntary codes of conduct in order to measure their effectiveness.

All of the panelists emphasized the important role that scientists play in multi-stakeholder initiatives and voluntary codes of conduct. The scientific community can bring concerns from the local community to companies, and can even act as a stakeholder within the initiatives. Having roles as stakeholders allows for scientists and engineers to contribute to the formation of voluntary regulation and multi-stakeholder collaboration which could create more effective impacts.

Plenary: Looking to the Future- How Can Science and Technology Associations Contribute?

Speakers: *Thomas M. Connelly, Jr.*, American Chemical Society
Katie Shay, International Corporate Accountability Roundtable
Lynn M. Sicade, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Multilateral and Global Affairs Office

Emira Woods, ThoughtWorks

Moderator: *Bruce Friesen, American Sociological Associations*

This session discussed the role of scientists and engineers in future endeavors within the field of business and human rights. Because the intersection of business and human rights is fairly new, the role of scientists in the field is still being discovered across sectors. Panelists highlighted how scientists and engineers can contribute to the field of business and human rights from three different perspectives: association, nonprofit, and government. From the association perspective, **Thomas M. Connelly**, Executive Director and CEO of the [American Chemical Society \(ACS\)](#), explained the recent work of ACS in the field of business and human rights. The Society provides a range of activities that allow its members to become more involved in the field of science and human rights, including the creation of a chemist's code of ethics within the organization.

From the nonprofit perspective, **Katie Shay**, Legal and Policy Coordinator at the [International Corporate Accountability Roundtable \(ICAR\)](#), described ICAR, a coalition of human rights, environmental, labor, and development organizations that creates, promotes, and defends legal frameworks to ensure corporations respect human rights in their operations. The work of ICAR centers on government advocacy to prevent human rights abuses. One of the current ways ICAR does this is advocating for the creation of National Action Plans (NAPs). The ways in which NAPs can prevent abuse includes oversight of government procurement and increasing access to remedies for victims of human rights abuses.

From the government perspective, **Lynn Sicade**, Senior Advisor for Multilateral and Global Affairs and Deputy Director of the Office of Multilateral Affairs in the [Department of State's Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor \(DRL\)](#), explained that the U.S. National Action Plan on Responsible Conduct of Business is still underway and that there is room for scientists become involved in its development. She emphasized fostering the role of scientists in the creation of NAPs in order to advance the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

In every role that scientists may play in the field of business and human rights, **Emira Woods**, Director of Social Impact at [ThoughtWorks](#), emphasized that scientists should try to be on the right side of history. To provoke scientists to become more involved in the conversation of business and human rights, she quoted Thomas Sankara', encouraging scientists to "dare to invent the future."

Facilitated Small Group Discussions Summary

Attendees split up into three different groups to identify strategic actions that Coalition members and their partners can take to advance the Business and Human Rights agenda. The three facilitators of the groups were **Dorothy Phillips**, Director-At-Large of the [American Chemical Society \(ACS\)](#); **Betsy Super**, Senior Director of Research and Development at the [American Political Science Association \(APSA\)](#); and **Jeff Toney**, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at [Kean University](#). Each group was asked to discuss three questions:

1. How is the scientific community already involved in implementing the goals from the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights?

Responses: The scientific community is involved in implementing the goals from the Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights through human rights impact

assessments and other documentation efforts, codes of ethics in industry and universities, the AAAS On-Call Scientists Program, and university partnerships with corporations. Overall there was a consensus that the scientific community is not doing as much as they can to implement the guiding principles and should be doing more.

2. What opportunities for increased collaboration between the science and technology communities and the human rights communities seem the most promising to you?

Responses: Some of the more promising opportunities for increased collaboration between the science and technology communities and the human rights communities included creating opportunity for dialogue between the communities, implementing ethics and human rights within courses in the STEM fields at the college and pre-college levels, creating an oath of ethics for scientists similar to the Hippocratic oath that doctors take, providing refuge for whistleblowers in the STEM fields, facilitating multidisciplinary collaboration on human rights topics, developing human rights language and integrating it into the codes of business practices, reaching out to CEOs, and benchmarking to clarify the work.

3. What are the first steps to take advantage of these opportunities?

Responses: The first steps that associations should take are working with students on projects that relate human rights to science, continuing the poster and essay contests, creating more contact to the developing world through projects, disseminating information about projects and plans, actively promoting ethical behavior and human rights responsibilities within societies through case studies and best practice examples, fostering a culture of collaboration, and creating a safe space for those who are unsure about the ethical and human rights implications of their work to discuss their situation and find help.